

The Young People's Magazine

**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1



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Cover Picture: Tower Bridge, London, with HMS Belfast, a World War II cruiser, on the right of the picture. See page 83.

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Volume 85

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Number 5

At the First Ting of the Alarm Bells

The 18-year-old joined the Royal Navy during World War 2. One of his instructors stressed to the recruits that dangers occur suddenly at sea, both through enemy action that may sink the ship, and through the sea itself – when sudden storms blow up and huge waves put the ship in danger. And there may be rocks just under the surface that do not appear on any chart but could damage the ship and cause it to sink.

Sailors need to be prepared for these unexpected dangers, especially in wartime. Instant reaction may be called for. This young sailor reacted very wisely; he wrote, “I made sure . . . to be on my way at the first ting of the alarm bells. Delay can mean the difference between life and death.”

Life in peacetime also brings unexpected dangers. So much happens that cannot be predicted. There are the dangers of temptation, when someone suggests something that may lead us into sin. How are we to react? There is only one safe course and that is to reject the temptation at once. Of course no one should rely on their own strength to resist temptation; we must pray. We must ask God, for Christ's sake, to keep us from sinning.

Many another danger will meet us when we do not expect it – a danger that may cause us severe injury or some other kind of damage. As soon as we are aware of the danger we should seek God's help. And every morning, we should ask God to care for us and protect us from all kinds of harm and danger throughout the day. We should ask for His care whenever, for instance, we go out, bearing in mind how easily we may run into unexpected dangers that might harm us spiritually as well as in other ways. Again we should ask for God's help whenever we begin some new task, and continue to pray as we go on with the task.

Always remember Paul's words: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves”. We lack the wisdom and power to do things well, especially spiritual things, and even to think properly. Yet Paul has an answer; he adds: “but our sufficiency is of [from] God” (2 Corinthians 3:5); God can make us sufficient for every duty He lays upon us.

But let us think about the danger of death. It is a known danger, not

something unexpected. But the time when we will die may be completely unexpected. So we need to be preparing for it, as God tells us through Amos: "Prepare to meet thy God" (4:12). We are to make use of all the means that God gives us, through which we may find salvation, like reading the Bible and listening to the preaching of God's Word.

We should think of a verse like Amos 4:12 as sounding an alarm; it is a warning God is giving us, so that we may not perish for ever in a lost eternity because of our sins. And the first ting of that alarm should arouse us to seek a place of safety. But where can we find safety? In Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners from their sin and from its consequences.

Perhaps you can think of many other Bible statements that should sound an alarm in your conscience. For instance: "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh" (Hebrews 12:25). If God is speaking to us, we must listen – at once. There is no time to delay.

Again, preachers sound an alarm when they quote such verses and when they explain what God has to say to sinners. The fact that those who go on refusing Christ will go down to a lost eternity should sound a very loud alarm in a sinner's mind, so loud that the sinner should not, for even a moment, delay fleeing to Christ for safety. No one has any right to delay.

Besides, when Christ calls us to come to Him – to believe on Him – we should come at once. We should consider not only the danger we are in if we do not come, but His authority when He calls. We have no right to refuse, because He is the Son of God and He has complete authority over us.

God speaks to us through the Bible; He tells us: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). The love of the world and of the things of the world is so strong in the hearts of sinners that they are inclined to ignore what God is saying. But God is telling us about what is acceptable to *Him*. That is what matters, not what is acceptable to us.

What we are told about Felix should also sound an alarm. When Paul was warning him about his need to repent, about how he should live and about the day of judgement, Felix trembled. But he ignored the warning; he paid no attention to what Paul told him; he just said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). There were many times when it was convenient for Felix to speak with Paul, but he wasted all these opportunities. Each time, he just asked Paul for a bribe; he did not seek further instruction about the way of salvation.

People may promise themselves that they will seek salvation at some other time, although they ignore the ringing of the alarm at present. They may think that they will find safety later, that the alarm will continue ringing for a very

long time. But besides the fact that this is to reject the authority of God and His Word, your heart is becoming harder every time you ignore the alarm. You are becoming more and more resistant to what He is telling you.

Indeed God may never again make you think about your soul; He may leave you to your own ways, which are bringing you nearer and nearer to a lost eternity. The sailor heard of an officer on another ship who lost his life because he let the alarm ring too long before he sought safety. No one should treat spiritual things like that; the salvation of the soul is vital.

Remember that it is your wisdom and your duty to obey what God says to you. Remember you should flee to Christ for salvation at the first tinging of the alarm, whenever the Lord speaks to you through His Word. Remember that delay can mean the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

Counted Innocent in Heaven's Court

3. Faith and Good Works

Rev J R Tallach

This Youth Conference paper is about the Bible's teaching on justification. Last month's article emphasised that justification is *by faith*.

Joshua not only has the filthy garments taken away from him but a fair mitre is put on his head. The Lord removes his iniquities from him as far as east is distant from the west, and thus causes his iniquity to pass from him. The change of raiment is not from any store of clean clothes that Joshua has, but the same Lord who plucked him as a brand from the burning provides him with a covering of His own righteousness.

The crown of the priesthood is put upon Joshua: "Let them set a fair mitre upon his head" – a sign of being a priest. Those who are justified are made priests with God. "The angel of the Lord stood by", like the father in Jesus' parable ordering the robe, the ring and the shoes for the returning prodigal son. The angel of the Lord is the Saviour who sat down among sinners and told the parable of the prodigal son and thus invited sinners to Himself (Luke 15:11-32).

Joshua was given places to walk among those that "stand by". That is, he was given a place of service in the Lord's work. The walk was to be a holy walk and a life of service. Paul identified himself as a "servant of Jesus Christ". He was, after his conversion, put among those that stood there waiting to do His will. He was asking that question repeatedly: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The serving maid from Israel, working in Naaman's household, was also standing by the Lord when she bore witness: "Would

God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For He would recover him of his leprosy” (2 Kings 5:3). And so it came about.

There is, of course, a necessary and healthy relationship between justification by faith and good works. Good works are those done by faith, in line with God's revealed will in the Bible. And the Lord says, “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10). So our works play no part in our justification; it rests solely on the finished work of Christ.

Roman Catholic teaching is dangerously wrong here. They believe that, since part of justification is infused into the heart at baptism, the believer himself becomes righteous. They go on to claim that the good works this “righteous” person then does form the basis of the sinner's justification. A curse is pronounced by the Roman Catholic Church on any who state that sinners are justified only by faith on the righteousness of Christ. But Roman Catholic teaching on justification:

(1) Makes little of the atonement Christ has worked out. If our works are necessary to achieve justification, it denies to Christ the glory that is His alone.

(2) It over-estimates our good works. Man's duty is to be perfect before God and he therefore deserves no thanks. The apostles were taught to pray, “Forgive us our sins”, and the most careful believer has to say, “God be merciful to me a sinner”.

The term Evangelical Roman Catholic is used these days but it is inconsistent and dishonest. You either stand upon the merit of Christ “and know no other stand, not even where Glory dwelleth, in Immanuel's land”, which is evangelical, or you trust in your own works, which is the Roman Catholic way. You cannot do both.

For Junior Readers

It Is Good to Draw Near to God

Have you ever read the chapters in the Bible that describe the building of Solomon's temple, in 1 Kings and also in 2 Chronicles? It was a wonderful building. When it was finished, there was a solemn opening service of prayer and sacrifices.

After this the Lord appeared to Solomon one night and encouraged him. The Lord said, “I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to Myself for an house of sacrifice”. Then He promised that He would hear them in difficult times – times of solemn judgements – if they turned to Him in prayer.

The Lord gave examples of such times: “If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people” – in other words: drought, swarms of locusts and disease. This year already we have seen all these things. There have been drought and terrible bushfires in Australia; the worst swarms of locusts for a quarter of a century, destroying crops in East Africa and South Asia; and then the coronavirus spreading through the world and causing the deaths of thousands of people.

Truly the Lord’s solemn judgements are in the world – not just in remote places that we read about, but in our country too. And what about the steps taken by the government in Britain to stop the spread of the disease? Isolating in our own homes, keeping two metres away from others when we are outside. And then closing places of worship!

Is that not so very solemn? The doors of all churches closed throughout Britain and elsewhere. No preaching of the Word of God in church, no public offer of the gospel. Is that not a terrible judgement on our country, and other countries of the world?

Yet the Lord encourages us in the Bible. He says, “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you”. Yes, you must keep your distance from others, but not from God! You can still draw near to God when you read your Bible, sing the Psalms and pray. And then may you be able to say, with the Psalmist in Psalm 73, “But surely it is good for me that I draw near to God.”

You can also pray that the time will come very soon when we can attend public worship again in church. And you should rejoice like David when he said, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.”

J van Kralingen

“Let Us Pray to God”

The man was just over 50. He was married and had several children. One evening someone persuaded him to go to a service. The preacher spoke on the words, “Pray without ceasing”. He told the congregation that the command was reasonable and pointed to some truths in the Bible that should encourage people to pray always. No doubt he explained the verse as telling people to be always ready to pray.

Then the preacher began to describe someone he believed was present that evening, a sinner who had never repented. He said, “I will describe him. He arose in the morning and did not pray. He has asked no blessing for his own soul or for his friends today. He has come to this meeting but he has not

prayed that it might be blessed to his own soul.” The preacher believed that, if this individual would ever become a good man, the first thing to be said about him would be: “Behold, he prayeth” – as the Lord said about Saul of Tarsus after he was converted.

The man felt that all this was for himself. He began to worry about living without prayer. He could not understand why he would live like this when it was so reasonable for him to pray and the Bible was so plain on the matter. He decided at once that he must try to pray. Outside, the ground was covered with snow and a cold wind was blowing, but he knelt down in a quiet place and tried to ask God for mercy. Indeed he tried to pray more than once on his way home; he asked for pardon for how he had lived his life and for God's help in the future. But he felt that there was a wall of sin between himself and God. For some days he tried to learn to pray and to make himself better, but the more he tried, the worse things seemed to be.

He tried to read, to pray and to fast, but he was none the better. At last he decided that he had sinned for too long, that there was no possibility of mercy for him now.

One day he went into his barn and started to thresh his wheat, but he felt very sad. He thought about the wasted years of his life: he had not lived a godly life and he had not prayed. He was afraid that he would have all his good things in this life, but nothing good in eternity. Then, as he thought of his sins, he remembered the words, “My son, give Me thine heart” (Proverbs 23:26). He wondered that God would ask him this and said to himself: “He knows what a heart I have, how hard, how polluted, how unfit for life or for death, and yet He says, ‘Give Me thine heart’. What can He want of my heart? He wants it to make it good, to create it anew, to wash it in the blood of Christ, and make it a temple fit for His Spirit to live in.”

The man let go the flail he was using to thresh the wheat and he dropped onto the straw lying beside him. He confessed that he was a poor, vile sinner. God's plan of salvation seemed so wonderful to him now, so suitable for lost sinners. He felt that he had spent his whole life in the dark and he was upset that no one had ever explained to him the way of salvation. He was now made willing that God should have his heart.

God also made him willing to pray. But now he realised that he must pray with his family. He felt this very difficult. His children were now aged between 12 and 20. They had been well educated; he was not. He was a shy man, and Satan so tempted him that he felt more than ever the difficulty of praying in front of his children.

The days passed and the thought of praying with them worried him more and more. Sometimes he was clear that this was his duty; at other times it

was even more clear to him that he was not able to do it. He would decide to pray with his family on a particular day but, when the day came, he would put it all off till another day.

One Sabbath he was determined to start. He tried to prepare by thinking over various verses from the Bible and various petitions he had heard in church. Evening came and still he had not prayed with his children. One after another went away to bed and only his wife was left with him.

Only then did he tell his wife about the difficulties that had been worrying him for so long. He stood up and began the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father which art in heaven”. He could go no further. He began again and still could say no more. He burst into tears and so did his wife. Then she went away to bed and he picked up his Bible.

As he read, he came to the verse, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:6). He realised that he should pray to God on his own, asking for help in praying with his family. This, he believed, was how the Lord would reward him openly. He knelt down at once and prayed for God’s help.

The next morning he first prayed alone for help in praying with his family. Then he asked all his children to gather with him. First he told his wife: “I have a confession to make to you: you have never heard me pray. I have lived 50 years and have never prayed in my family.” He then asked his children: “Will you forgive your father for neglecting to pray with you?” He told them that he was truly guilty, because he should have prayed with them from the time when they were little babies. “God has required it,” he went on, “and it is a most reasonable duty. Will you forgive me?”

The father then took up a Bible and read Psalm 51: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. . .”. He then said, “Let us pray to God that He may forgive us”.

Looking back afterwards, the father said about that morning: “How delightful it seemed to come to God with my family. I could have prayed all day. I never loved my wife and children so well before.” He now thought of them as beings who had souls that would never die, which seemed a new idea for him. And ever afterwards, in his private prayers, he always asked God to help him to pray with his family.

There are obvious lessons here about the duty to hold family worship. But another important lesson is that we should pray about everything we do. Even if what we have to do is very unexpected, we should pray about it, however briefly. Remember that God hears prayer.

The Tabernacle and Temple

2. The Second Temple

Rev J B Jardine

Last month's part of this Youth Conference paper told about the tabernacle built for the Children of Israel in the wilderness and about the first temple built by Solomon but destroyed by the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

The Second Temple. It was built between approximately 500 and 450 BC. *Ezra 1:2-4* contains the decree of Cyrus, King of Persia, allowing the Jewish exiles to return to their own land and stating that the temple at Jerusalem should be rebuilt. The decree also ordered the Jews who remained in exile to support the work. It is repeated in *Ezra 6:3-5*, where the specifications for rebuilding the temple are given and the order to return the vessels looted by Nebuchadnezzar.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest to organise the rebuilding of the temple and re-establish the priesthood in a pure way and eventually the temple was rededicated. Ezra was sent from Babylon to Jerusalem to declare God's law, as a teacher and judge. Nehemiah too came to Jerusalem and acted as governor.

There were old men present at the dedication of the second temple who remembered the first temple; they mourned at the modest size of the second temple, compared to the grandeur of the first. But the prophets assured them that the glory of the second temple would eventually outshine the first. This was completely fulfilled in the coming of Christ.

Ezra was known as "Ezra the Scribe." He was the first Jewish leader to be known by this title and it seems to refer to his scholarly knowledge of the law of God. During his lifetime we see that the prophetic era gave way to the written word. The Scriptures – the part we now call the Old Testament – were closed because they contained the complete message from God until the coming of Christ. The scribe replaced the prophet. At this time, the scribe was a scholar who knew the Word of God and how to interpret it.

The prophets of the first temple complained about the idolatry of the people. All such idolatry had now ceased, and the Jews never again bowed down to idols. They believed that their covenant with God required them to keep the land free from the pollution of idols. The Jewish people became united in their support for the temple and its priests. Yet during Malachi's ministry later, temple worship continued in a slovenly and half-hearted manner (*Malachi 1:6-14, 3:6-12*).

Secular history tells us that, in 169 BC, a foreign king, Antiochus IV,

eliminated the high priesthood and rededicated the temple to the Greek god Zeus. He also outlawed the Word of God, in an attempt to make the nation like Greece. It is recorded that, at this time, the temple priests “ceased to show any interest in the services of the altar; scorning the temple and neglecting the sacrifices”.

In 165 BC, Judah Maccabees and his followers gained control of the temple. They cleansed the temple before restarting the worship of God.

Herod's Temple. In 22 BC, Herod the Great enlarged the temple mount and repaired the temple; 10 000 workmen, and 1000 priests supervising them, were involved in the work. The new temple was surrounded by porches, outbuildings and purification pools, which were all used for the work of the temple. Herod's temple was the one which was in existence when the Lord was on the earth. A knowledge of temple worship during this period helps one to understand Jesus' life and work.

Luke 2 records that the Saviour was taken to the temple as an infant. It also mentions that He returned at age 12 to visit the temple. Later, during His temptation in the wilderness, the devil took Him to the pinnacle of the temple. In John 2, we are told about Jesus cleansing the temple and, in Matthew 24, about Him pronouncing judgement on the temple.

It was a time of great religious development within Judaism. At this time the Jewish state was called Judah, which was the geographical name for the area from north of Jerusalem south to the desert, and from the beginning of the hill country in the west to the Dead Sea in the east. The area identified as the land of Israel had no political significance but it retained a religious significance. Jews dwelling in Israel were still required to bring sacrifices to the temple. Only Jews outside the ancient bounds of Israel were not obliged to do so.

Many Gentiles, during the inter-testamental period, adopted the Jewish belief in the one God. They gave the half-shekel to the temple. They were supported by the Pharisees, who carried out missionary work among the Gentiles. But the Sadducees believed that you could only be a Jew by birth.

After the Roman conquest of Judah, the Romans auctioned the high priesthood every two years to the highest bidder from among the top priestly families. Herod, and then the Romans, kept the high priestly garments in the royal palace. The high priest had to come each morning to receive his garments from the political rulers as a symbol of his submission to their higher authority. An extra morning sacrifice was also offered in honour of the Roman Emperor.

The temple had become not only a place of worship but the central institution of Jewish life. The Temple Mount became the centre of social,

political, religious, judicial and economic life. It was used like the city gate had been in the past. The King held power over the affairs of state. The high priest presided in the temple and remained the active head of the Jews as a people.

This came to an end in AD 70, when the Jews rebelled against Roman rule, and the temple was destroyed. The temple had been used as a base for the rebellion, during the siege of Jerusalem. The temple had served as the main focus of Jewish national and religious life; after it was destroyed, many of its customs were gradually absorbed by the synagogue.

Matthew, Mark and Luke speak of Jesus preaching and healing in the synagogues throughout Galilee. John speaks of him preaching openly in the synagogue and the temple. The synagogue in the time of Christ was for Scripture study, preaching and teaching, and only later did it become a place of prayer, when the prayers for salvation once recited around the altar at the Temple were recited around the reading table of the synagogue.

Bringing Back His Banished

Rev K M Watkins

We may well be feeling like Absalom these days. Although he was King David's son, he had been banished from Jerusalem for three years. Even when he was brought back to the city, he had to stay in his own house and could not gain access to the King's palace. You can read the story in 2 Samuel 14. Do you see why some people are feeling like Absalom? With the coronavirus lockdown closing the doors of our churches, we cannot attend public worship any longer. It is as if we are banished from the house of King Jesus. Indeed, there is a sense in which we ought to feel like that.

Absalom had brought his troubles on himself. He had murdered a man. By doing so, he had broken the law of God. King David loved God's law, and had to be displeased with a man who had broken it. The man that Absalom murdered was called Amnon, and Amnon was his own brother. No wonder King David was displeased! It was David's own son that Absalom had murdered. Absalom deserved to die for what he had done, just like every other murderer, for "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6). Absalom was a man under sentence of death, and what communion could there be between him and the King? Instead of facing up to his crimes and handing himself in, Absalom had fled from justice. How could the King be reconciled to such an outlaw, such a fugitive from justice?

We need to consider whether we may have brought our present troubles upon ourselves. Like Absalom, we have broken God's law. There are duties commanded which we have not done. There are things forbidden which we have done. Probably we have not murdered anyone physically, but we have broken the Sixth Commandment every time we have been angry with someone wrongly, hating them in our hearts. And if we go through all the Ten Commandments, we will find that we have been breaking them our whole lives, in heart, speech and behaviour. For this we deserve the punishment of death, for "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). We deserve to be cast off by King Jesus. We deserve His doors to be closed against us, especially if like Absalom we have been refusing to face up to the true wickedness of our sin.

Every day that Absalom continued estranged from his father was another day for him to think about his crime and lay it to heart. Every day that he was banished from the palace was another day for him to consider how greatly he had offended the King. Every day that he was cut off from the King was another day for him to think how good it would be to be in the King's favour. Every day he was in banishment was another day for him to enquire, Did the King have a way to bring him back? Every day of silence from the palace was another day for him to long to hear the King's voice pronouncing him forgiven and accepted.

Likewise for ourselves. Every day that the church doors are closed, is a day to think about how long our hearts may have been closed against King Jesus. How often did He come to us in the preaching of the gospel, knocking at our hearts and saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). And how often did we close the door of our hearts against Him! How often did He call us in the gospel, saying, "Unto you, O men, I call; and My voice is to the sons of man" (Proverbs 8:4). But the ears of our hearts were deaf to His calls. Now we have no pulpit calls at all.

Every day that goes by without any sign that public worship will begin again, is another day to think about how we behaved ourselves in public worship when we had it. Were we diligent in attending God's house? Were we attentive and respectful when we were there? Did we like being there? Perhaps Absalom had never enjoyed being with David very much. Their characters and interests were so different. Was it like that with us in God's house? Perhaps we did not enjoy being there, because there was nothing there that really interested us. But how do we feel now, when we cannot go?

It was all very depressing for Absalom, banished as he was. The widow

of Tekoah blamed David for being “as one which is faulty, in that the King doth not fetch home again his banished” (2 Samuel 14:13). David seemed to be in two minds about it all. It took him another two years before he could bring Absalom into his presence. Even then the reconciliation did not last.

But when King Jesus brings back His banished, it is not like that! As the widow told David, God “doth devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him” (2 Samuel 14:14). Unlike David’s failed attempt to make peace between himself and Absalom, King Jesus has a perfect way to bring souls to Himself in peace. Yes, sinners deserve to be expelled and sent away from Him for ever. But He has planned the perfect method by which to welcome them back. That method is the gospel! And the Saviour’s whole heart is in it. He delights in mercy. He loves to forgive. He welcomes with open arms those who come to Him in faith.

When King David forgave Absalom, it was contrary to the law of the land. The justice system required that someone should die, but Absalom did not die; neither did anyone else. The price went unpaid. If Absalom had thought about it, his conscience could never have been entirely at rest, because the law was always demanding punishment. At any moment, the forces of the law could arrest and execute him.

But in the gospel, King Jesus provides forgiveness that meets all the claims of justice. The punishment for sin was laid upon the Lord Jesus Himself, and on the cross He suffered and died. As their substitute, He took the place of His banished. His sense of banishment caused Him to cry out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Psalm 22:1). But when He said, “It is finished”, the price for sin had been paid in full, divine justice had been satisfied for ever and reconciliation had been secured. The blood of Jesus is the only place where anyone’s conscience may rest. And there it may rest for ever. No charge can be brought against anyone who believes in Christ, because Christ has already suffered for that sin.

Another difference is this: even though King David forgave Absalom, he could not change Absalom’s character. Even after being welcomed back, Absalom soon rose up in pride and rebellion and seized his father’s throne. Absalom had been brought back physically to David, but in his character he was the same rebel still.

But in the gospel, when King Jesus forgives a sinner who trusts in Him, He also changes that sinner’s heart. He gives him a new heart. When King Jesus brings back His banished, He brings them to Himself in faith and love. This reconciliation will last for ever, for the Saviour will never turn from His love, and the believer will never want to leave his Saviour. Unlike Absalom, who kept on revealing how estranged he was from King David, true believers

will always cleave to King Jesus. If they are asked, “Will ye also go away?” their reply will always be, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:67,68).

We do not know when the church doors will open again. We do not know when the gospel will be heard again from the pulpit. That is a great, great loss. We need to think very seriously why it is that the Lord has done that. But we are not shut out from the gospel itself. We may still open our Bibles, searching for King Jesus. We may still bend our knees at the throne of grace, crying in prayer for mercy, that the Lord would give us new hearts, so that we would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and repent of our sin.

Looking Around Us

A Kinder Place?

A writer in *The Herald* newspaper asks if the UK will emerge from the virus as a kinder place. He does not expect it will. And he is very likely to be proved right. But there is a whole series of reasons that he does not consider.

The basic reason is that everyone has a sinful heart. Yes, we sometimes see remarkable instances of people showing great kindness and acting in a very selfless way. This is often seen in circumstances like these, when there is such danger of suffering a very serious illness caused by the virus known as Covid-19. That is due to God’s kindness in keeping people back from being as sinful as they would otherwise be.

Yet there is a great deal of selfishness and unkindness throughout society, and nothing can really change that except the powerful working of God’s Spirit, applying His Word to people’s souls. David felt his own need and prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). Each of us should use that prayer; we should begin with ourselves. Then we should ask God to pour out His Spirit and bless His Word to large numbers of people all over the world. If the Lord would do so in the UK, it would become a much kinder place and so would every other country where it would please Him to work.

When people are converted, they will love God and His commandments. They will also seek to love their neighbour, especially in the light of the second section of the Ten Commandments. What a different world it will be when God will so bless His Word that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9)! Other events *may* do some good, but we cannot expect a major change in an individual or in a nation apart from a great work of God’s grace.

*For Younger Readers***The Open Door**

A minister was walking along a road. He was very sad. As he walked along, he had to pass a cottage. The door of the cottage was open and he could hear what was said inside.

A girl was reading aloud from the Bible. He heard the words, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be". The words told him that God could give him strength to face every difficulty on every day of his life. That was a big help to him. God used these words to take away his sadness.

If the door of your house was open, what would people outside hear? Would they hear you speaking in an angry voice to your father or mother? Or to your brother or sister? You would not like anyone to hear what you say when you are in a bad mood.

Perhaps your front door is always shut. And you say that no one can hear you. But there is Someone who can always hear you wherever you are. That is God. He hears and sees everything that we do and say, and even what we think. You should ask Him to keep you from speaking in an angry way, and from saying anything that is sinful.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2019-20**Exercise 3**

All answers from *overseas* should be sent to *Miss Naomi Clemence, 67 Cloberhill Road, Glasgow, G13 2LB*. The correctors should have your answers before the end of June. These exercises are based on: Joshua 14 to 1 Samuel 25, and Acts 20 to 2 Corinthians 4.

Senior Section (15 years old and over)

UK answers to *Mrs J Hicklin, 29 The Green, Edinburgh, EH4 5AF*.

Old Testament

The questions are based on Joshua 23 and 24

1. (a) Why did Joshua call all the elders of Israel together? (1)
- (b) He reminded them of two things: what God had already done for them, and what God was promising to do. What were they? (2)
- (c) On what condition does the fulfilment of this promise depend? (see verses 6-8) (2)
- (d) What would happen if they did not remain faithful to God and His laws? (2)
- (e) What does Joshua mean by saying he is "going the way of all the earth", and why do you think he calls it that? (2)

- (f) Write out the argument that Joshua uses in verse 14 to encourage them to believe in God's faithfulness. (2)
2. (a) Find five historical events that Joshua reminds the Israelites of, to encourage them to believe in God's faithfulness. (5)
- (b) What was Joshua's personal resolve, regardless of whether the Israelites would follow him in this? (2)
- (c) How did the people respond? (1)
- (d) For what purpose did Joshua set up a stone under an oak tree? (2)
- (e) In Judges we read of Israel's repeated failure to keep their covenant with God. What can we learn from this about the wisdom of relying solely on our resolve to serve God? (1)

New Testament

Read Acts 26, where we are told about Paul appearing before King Agrippa.

1. What reason is given by Festus at the end of chapter 25 for Paul's hearing before Agrippa? (2)
2. Why was Paul happy to have Agrippa as his judge? (1)
3. What does Paul say in defence of his way of life before his conversion? (2)
4. How had Paul persecuted the Christians? (4)
5. Describe his experience on the Damascus road. (4)
6. What reasons did Paul give for the Jews trying to kill him? (3)
7. Write out 2 consecutive verses where Paul argues that he is not contradicting the Jewish religion, but is a follower of Christ, who fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures. (4)
8. What was Festus' response to Paul's defence? (1)
9. What was King Agrippa's response? (1)
10. Why do you think Agrippa thought differently? (2)
11. What was their final judgement concerning Paul? (1)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 21 in the Shorter Catechism: Who is the Redeemer of God's elect? (3)

Intermediate Section (13 and 14 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs E Couper, 17 Duncan Street, Thurso, Caithness, KW14 7HU.*

Old Testament

1. In (a) and (b) complete these quotations from Ruth chapter 1: (2)
- (a) "Intreat me not to leave thee" (2)
- (b) "Call me not Naomi" (2)
- (c) State (1) who spoke these words. (2)
- (2) to whom they were spoken. (2)
- (3) why they were spoken. (4)
2. Read 1 Samuel chapter 7. (1)
- (a) Where had the ark been for a long time? (1)
- (b) How many years had it been there? (1)
- (c) Name the two strange gods which Israel put away. (2)
- (d) Where did Samuel gather the people together? (1)
- (e) What three things did the people do there? (3)
- (f) What confession did they make? (1)
- (g) What did Samuel do for the people? (2)
- (h) How did the Lord demonstrate his power over the Philistines? (2)
- (i) Give the meaning of Ebenezer. (1)

New Testament

1. Read Romans chapter 12. (2)
- (a) What are Christians warned against in verses 3 and 16? (2)
- (b) What should be our attitude to evil? (1)
- (c) What advice is given about prayer? (1)
- (d) How should we treat our enemies? (2)

- (e) Complete the verse, “ Rejoice with them . . . ” (2)
- 2. Read Acts 27:14- 38.
 - (a) What was Euroclydon? (1)
 - (b) Why had those in the ship given up all hope of being saved? (3)
 - (c) What did the angel of God say to Paul? (2)
 - (d) How many times did Paul (in these verses) tell the men to “be of good cheer”? (2)
 - (e) Each time he gave a reason for all in the ship to be “of good cheer”. What were they? (2)
 - (f) How many people were in the ship? (1)
 - (g) In order to lighten the ship, what did they cast into the sea? (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 42 in the Shorter Catechism: What is the sum of the Ten Commandments? (3)

Junior Section (11 and 12 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Logan, 188 Willowbrae Road, Edinburgh EH8 7QH.*

Old Testament

- 1. Read Judges chapter 7 verses 1-20.
 - (a) What nation did Gideon deliver the children of Israel from? (1)
 - (b) How many soldiers did he have when he went to fight? (1)
 - (c) Why did God want him to have so few soldiers? (see verse 2) (1)
 - (d) What 3 things did the soldiers carry with them when they went to fight? (3)
 - (e) What did they do with these 3 things at the time of battle? (3)
- 2. From the Book of Ruth, complete the following table:

The words spoken	Spoken by	Spoken to
Go, return each to her mother’s house (chapter 1)		
Intreat me not to leave thee (chapter 1)		
Why have I found grace in thine eyes? (chapter 2)		
Let her glean even among the sheaves (chapter 2)		

(8)

- 3. Give the name of the father of:
 - (a) Hophni (1 Samuel 1:1- 4)
 - (b) Samuel (1 Samuel 1:19-23)
 - (c) Ichabod (1 Samuel 4:19-22)
 - (d) Saul (1 Samuel 9:1-10)

New Testament

- 1. Read about the shipwreck in Acts chapter 27.
 - (a) What was the name of the centurion who had charge of the prisoners? (1)
 - (b) How did the centurion show kindness to Paul? (1)
 - (c) What was Euroclydon? (1)
 - (d) In verse 21, Paul says, “Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me and not have loosed from Crete”. Find the verse, earlier in the chapter, when he gave them this advice and write it out. (2)
 - (e) Who said to Paul: “Fear not; thou must be brought before Caesar”? (1)
 - (f) How many people were in the ship? (1)
 - (g) Why would the centurion not allow the soldiers to kill any of the prisoners? (1)
- 2. Read Romans 12:9-21. How are we commanded to behave:
 - (a) towards that which is evil
 - (b) towards one another

- (c) in business
 - (d) in tribulation
 - (e) towards those who persecute us? (5)
3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:26-58.
- (a) What is referred to as “the last enemy that shall be destroyed”? (1)
 - (b) What is the sting of death? (1)
 - (c) There is a contrast (difference) between the body of a believer as it is laid in the grave and the same body when it will be raised again at the resurrection. Fill in the missing word:
 - (1) It is sown in corruption; it is raised in _____
 - (2) It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in _____
 - (3) It is sown in weakness; it is raised in _____
 - (4) It is sown a natural body; it is raised a _____ (4)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 41 in the Shorter Catechism: Where is the moral law summarily comprehended? (3)

Upper Primary Section (9 and 10 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Schouten, 58 Fairfield Road, Inverness, IV3 5QW.*

Old Testament

1. Joshua has died and we now find out what happens to the nation of Israel. Read Judges 2:11-16.
- (a) What did the Israelites do which angered the Lord? (1)
 - (b) How did He punish them? (1)
 - (c) Whom did the Lord “raise up” to help them? (1)
2. After reading the Bible verses, write in the table below the answer to the following questions: What is the name of the judge? Who was the enemy of Israel? How many years was there peace in the land during the rule of the judge?

<i>Read</i>	<i>The Judge</i>	<i>The Enemy</i>	<i>Number of Years</i>
(a) Judges 3:8-11			
(b) Judges 6:12-14 and 8:28			
(c) Judges 11:4-6 and 12:7			
(d) Judges 13:1,24,25 and 16:30,31			

(12)

New Testament

- The last few chapters of Acts tell us about Paul, now a prisoner but still a preacher.
1. Read Acts 24:24-27.
 - (a) What did Paul speak to Felix about? (1)
 - (b) Why did Felix tremble? (1)
 2. Read Acts 26:24-29.
 - (a) What question did Paul ask King Agrippa? (1)
 - (b) What answer did Agrippa give? (1)
 - (c) Paul had one desire for Agrippa and all those listening to him. What was it? (1)
 3. Read Acts 28:30-31. How did Paul spend the two years in Rome? (1)
 4. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 telling us of the institution (setting up) of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

- (a) From whom did Paul receive it? (1)
- (b) On which night did the Lord begin it? (1)
- (c) What did He do before breaking the bread? (1)
- (d) What does the broken bread tell us about? (1)
- (e) What does the cup of wine tell us about? (1)
- (f) For how long is His death to be remembered in this world? (1)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write down the answer to Question 92 in the Shorter Catechism:
What is a sacrament? (3)

Lower Primary Section (8 years old and under)

UK answers to *Mrs R J Dickie, 11 Churchill Drive, Stornoway, Lewis, HS1 2NP.*

Old Testament

Manoah and his wife had no children.

1. Who appeared to his wife and told her she would have a son? (Judges 13:3)
2. Did he say she could eat and drink all things? (Judges 13:7)
3. Fill in the words: the c_____ shall be a Nazarite to G____. (Judges 13:7)
4. Manoah prayed for the angel to come again. Fill in the words: How shall we o_____ the child and how shall we d____ unto him? (bring him up) (Judges 13:12)
5. The child was to be a Nazarite. Was he to cut his hair? (Judges 13:5)
6. Who were the wicked people he would begin to deliver Israel from? (Judges 13:5)
7. What was the name of this child that the Lord blessed? (Judges 13:24)

New Testament

The Bible tells us how we should live. Fill in the missing words.

1. Abhor (hate) that which is e____; c_____ (stick fast) to that which is g____. (Romans 12:9)
2. Be k_____ affectioned one to another. (Romans 12:10)
3. Not s_____ (lazy) in business. (Romans 12:11)
4. Rejoicing in h____; (Romans 12:12)
5. p_____ in tribulation; (trouble) (Romans 12:12)
6. instant in p_____ (Romans 12:12)
7. Rejoice with them that do r_____, and w_____ with them that weep. (Romans 12:15)
8. Be of the same m_____ one toward another. (Romans 12:16)
9. Be not overcome of e_____, but overcome evil with g_____. (Romans 12:21)

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